

KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2014

Committee Members: Denise Boyd, Florence Boynton (Treasurer), Eli Cohen, Aaron Kropf, Helen MacMellon (Vice-Chair), Kathleen Woods Masalski (Chair), Nancy Pagano (Staff Liaison), Diana Stein (Select Board Liaison), William Stenzel

Between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014, the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee (KSCC) remained dedicated to its purpose: to promote friendship and ongoing relations with the Town of Kanegasaki, Japan, Amherst's sister city since 1993. To accomplish this purpose, the Committee sponsored special events and maintained contacts amongst residents, educational and governmental bodies of the two communities that contributed to the mutual benefit of each.

The year 2013 marked the 20th anniversary of a formal agreement between the Town of Amherst and the Town of Kanegasaki, Iwate, Japan. It was preceded by an agreement between the Amherst Regional School Committee and Kanegasaki's Board of Education in 1989, and followed by an agreement between the Jones Library and the Kanegasaki Town Library in 2003.

During the many years of this relationship, hundreds of students and teachers from Kanegasaki have visited Amherst and more than 100 students and teachers from Amherst have traveled to Kanegasaki. Multitudes of books have been exchanged between the libraries, and a sizeable number of governmental officials from both towns have visited their counterparts in the respective communities. Add to this, the number of private individuals from both communities who have also benefitted from the exchange, either through visiting Kanegasaki or welcoming visitors to their home towns.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: "CELEBRATING THE PAST, WELCOMING THE FUTURE"

On Sunday, September 29th, Amherst welcomed a delegation of eight officials from Kanegasaki. The KSCC, capably led by Chair Kathleen Woods Masalski, busily arranged the details for this four-day visit entitled, "Celebrating the Past, Welcoming the Future". This involved finding community and Town sponsors for lunches and dinners, arranging official meetings, visiting farms and businesses, and touring around Amherst. The success of the visit is attributed to Town governmental bodies, businesses, organizations and individuals. The Town Manager and Assistant Manager, the Select Board, the Regional School Committee and the Trustees of the Jones Library showed enthusiastic support, as did individuals who formerly served on those bodies or in roles related to the sister-city. Anniversaries were celebrated: nearly twenty-five years of middle-school exchanges, twenty as sister cities, and ten as sister libraries. The schools, towns and libraries renewed their international agreements.

The Amherst Club, Amherst Garden Club, and Amherst League of Women Voters hosted our guests. Others conducted tours: Amherst Historical Society and Museum, Emily Dickinson Museum, Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst Brewing Company, Atkins Farms and Country Market, and Swartz Family Farm. UMass and Amherst College contributed to the Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner, respectively, and the Five College Center for East Asian Studies and the Lions Club backed additional aspects of the exchange. Kendrick Park vendors and local shops greeted the delegates. The BID provided trolley transportation, and Amherst Media documented proceedings. The ARHS Chorale performed at the Farewell Dinner, which was courtesy of the Trustees of the Jones Library. All contributions benefitted the KSCC's exchange efforts for which the Committee is very grateful.

ANNUAL KANEGASAKI MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT VISIT

March 19th-21st, Amherst welcomed nine boys and nine girls plus three chaperones from Kanegasaki. A welcome reception was held at Town Hall when the Town Manager, Select Board member Diana Stein, Amherst Middle School Guidance Counselor Denise Boyd, and KSCC members greeted the visitors. The visit afforded the chance for the students to visit classes in session, visit local places of interest like Yankee Candle and Old Deerfield, and have fun with their host families. Chaperones and KSCC members enjoyed dinner together three evenings and toured the area for a half day prior to a Farewell Dinner for host families, all children and KSCC members at the Amherst High School.